

THE POETS IN PICARDY

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E. DE STEIN



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THE POETS IN PICARDY
AND OTHER POEMS

THE POETS IN PICARDY
AND OTHER POEMS

BY E. DE STEIN

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1919

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TO
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

THE rhymes contained in this volume were all jotted down in France during 1916, 1917, and 1918, either in the trenches, in billets, or in the more dignified purlieus of staff offices.

Any merit that may be found in them is due to the influence of that wonderful spirit of light-heartedness, that perpetual sense of the ridiculous which, even under the most appalling conditions, never seemed to desert the men with whom I was privileged to serve and which indeed seemed to flourish more freely in the mud and rain of the front-line trenches than in the comparative comfort of billets or "cushy jobs," so that one was almost tempted to consider "humour" with Asper—

"To be a quality of air and water!"

I desire to thank the Editors of *The Times*, *Punch*, and *The Bystander* for permission to reprint a few of the poems included in this collection.

E. DE S.

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DEDICATION

TO

A SKYLARK SINGING BEHIND OUR TRENCHES

THOU little voice, thou happy sprite,
How didst thou gain the air and light
That sing'st so merrily ?
How could such little wings
Give thee thy freedom from these dense
And fetid tombs—these burrows whence
We peer like frightened things ?
In the free sky.
Thou sail'st while here we crawl and creep
And fight and sleep
And die.
How canst thou sing while Nature lies
Bleeding and torn beneath thine eyes,
And the foul breath
Of rank decay hangs like a shroud
Over the fields the shell hath ploughed ?
How canst thou sing so gay and glad
While all the heavens are filled with death
And all the world is mad ?
Yet sing—for at thy song
The torn trees stand up straight and strong
And stretch their twisted arms ;
And smoke ascends from pleasant farms,
And the shy flowers their odours give.
Once more the riven pastures smile
And for a while
We live.

THE POETS IN PICARDY



FRAGMENT OF A SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

"There are many things with which a stew can be thickened."
(*Extract from Regimental Orders.*)

SCENE I. *Battalion Orderly Room.*

Flourish. Enter COLONEL and ADJUTANT.

COLONEL. I do mistrust the soft and temperate air
That has so long enwrapped us. No "Returns
Of Bakers," Visitations of the Staff,
Alarms or inquisitions have disturbed
Our ten days' rest. Nothing but casual shells
And aerial bombs, to mind us of the War.

ADJUTANT. Oh ! Sir, thy zeal has mated with thy conscience
And bred i' the mind mistrustful doubts and fears—
A savage brood, which being come to manhood
Do fight with sweet content and eat her up.

COLONEL. Alas ! It is the part of those who govern
To play the miser with their present good
For fear of future ill. But who comes here ?

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. So please you I am sent of General Blood
To bid you wait his coming.

Extra bully, every lump
 Pinched from some forbidden dump.
 Biscuits crunched to look like flour,
 Cabbage sweet and onions sour,
 Make the broth as thick as glue.
 The General will inspect the stew

ALL. Fire burn and dixie bubble
 Double toil or there'll be trouble.

2ND COOK. 'Taters in the cauldron sink
 Peeled by hands as black as ink,
 Portions of a slaughtered cat,
 Piece of breakfast bacon fat,
 Bits of boot and bits of stick
 Make the gruel slab and thick.

ALL. Fire burn and dixie bubble
 Double toil or there'll be trouble.

3RD COOK. German sausage won in fight
 On some dark and stormy night,
 Dim and murky watercress
 Stolen from a sergeants' mess,
 Slabs of cheese and chunks of ham,
 Lumps of plum and apple jam,
 Bits of paper, ends of string
 Mixed with any damnèd thing
 In the cauldron mingle quick,
 So the stew be dense and thick.

ALL. Fire burn and dixie bubble
Double toil or there'll be trouble.

Exeunt.

SCENE III. *Outside Kitchen. Alarums.*

Enter ORDERLY CORPORAL.

Here's a pretty pass! Eye-wash, eye-wash, eye-wash!
And such a running to and fro and a go this way and a go that
way, and a burnishing up of old brass and a shouting of horrid
words as though the devil himself were inspecting his own fur-
nace! Faith! an I were eye-washing Beelzebub I could catch
it no hotter. Eye-wash! Marry a pretty word, that sees
not its own foolishness and is as unclean as a captured Bosch.
Eye-wash—that makes the strong man tremble and the weak
man bold—that cleans even the hands of a cook!

Shouting within.

Anon, anon, I will eye-wash it no further.

Exit.

*Flourish. Enter COLONEL, ADJUTANT, QUARTERMASTER,
and SERGEANT-COOK.*

COLONEL. Is all prepared?

SERGEANT-COOK.

The dinners would content

Rhondda himself.

QUARTERMASTER.

The General comes.

Flourish. Enter GENERAL and ATTENDANTS.

GENERAL. Good Colonel,
Our greetings are the warmer for the thought
Of visits past.

COLONEL. The service that we owe
In doing it pays itself. Will you inspect
The dinners ?

GENERAL. First we'll greet the Adjutant
Whom well we recollect.

ADJUTANT. This is an honour
Which makes our labours light. Will you be pleased
To inspect the dinners ?

GENERAL. Yes. But let us first
Discuss the present welfare of the troops
Whose good's our care.

SERGEANT-COOK to COLONEL. The time is getting long,
The stew's congealing fast !

COLONEL. Good General,
Your grace toward our people doth confound
Th' expression of our gratitude. The hour
For dinner is at hand. An you would grace
The issue with your presence it would make
The meal the sweeter.

GENERAL (*aside*). There doth seem to be
More than politeness in these invitations.

to COLONEL. I am no cook, to judge by sight and touch
The flavour of a dish. Issue the dinners

FRAGMENT FROM THE EDDA

A LAY OF SIDNI THE STOR-MAN

At the downcome of darkness
Up to the trenches
Fared he forth
Sidni the Stor-man.
On bent back
Bore he the Rum Jar,
Bringing a boon
To the Folk in the Front Line.
Scatheful the sky,
With no stars shining,
Monstrous the mud
That lay deep on the Duck Boards.
A weary while
Wandered he on,
No whit he wotted
Of fearful fate
Stalking his steps.
A weary while
Wandered he on

FRAGMENT FROM THE EDDA

Till—fearing—he felt for
The doubtful Duck Boards
No longer beneath him.
Then spake Sidni,
Steward of Stores,
“ Now I know
I have come to the Country
That men name No MAN’S,”
And his heart
Gat heavy within him
For horror of Hun Folk
Who crawl in the Craters.
Then there arose
Dim in the darkness
The face and form
Of Heinrik the Hun
With hand upheld
Bearing a bomb.
And fear gat hold
Of Sidni the Stor-man.
With force of fear
Raising the Rum Jar
Drave he adrad
At the face of the foeman
Down sank the Slayer
Smitten asunder,
And over his face

Unloosed ran the liquor.
Then Heinrik the Hun
Sang he this Swan Song,
" Hero I hail thee,
Godlike who givest
Fire and Sweetness
Born of a blow.
Logi thou art
Or Wotan the one-eyed
Coming to call me
Away to Walhall.
Happy I haste
To the hall of the Heroes.
Point thou the path,
I come ! I come ! "

But fast with the force
Of the fear that was in him
Fled Sidni the Stor-man
Back to the Britons,
And came by chance
Straightway to his section
Bearing the Rum Jar
Now lacking the liquor.
Then puffing with pride
And the pace of the running,
Told he a tale

Of the Slaying of Seven,
But little belief
In the count of the killing
Gat Sid from the section,
Wrathy withal
At the loss of the liquor.
And one thing Erb,
Erb that erstwhile
Hight his old Pal,
Had for an answer,
"Bale hast thou brought
And rede of Bale
Have I for thee."
Then troth they took
And oath sware betwixt them
That for four years full
Or the War's duration
They draw and drink
Sid's ration of Rum.
So doom was decreed
For the loss of the liquor.
But Sidni the Stor-man
Transferred to the Transport.

FRAGMENT OF A GREEK TRAGEDY

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A STAFF OFFICER. A HERALD.
A COLONEL. CHORUS OF OFFICERS' SERVANTS
A CAPTAIN. AND ORDERLIES.

SCENE. *Exterior of Battalion Headquarters Dug-out.*

LEADER OF Ho ! friends, a stranger cometh ; by his dress
CHORUS. Some nobleman of leisure, I should guess ;
Come, let us seem to labour, lest he strafe ;
A soldier ever eye-washes the Staff.

Chorus start work, singing.

Brighter than the queenly rose,
Brighter than the setting sun,
Brighter than old Ginger's nose
The raiment of the gilded one.
The red tab points towards each breast
The red band binds his forehead stern ;
The rainbow ribbons on his chest
Proclaim what fires within him burn.
Upon his throne amid the din
He sits serene—yet sometimes stoops
To take a kindly interest in
The trousers issued to the troops.

Enter STAFF OFFICER.

STAFF OFFICER. Ho ! slaves, your Colonel seeking have I come.
LEADER OF CHOR. This is his house, but he is far from home.

STAFF OFFICER. And whither gone ? Reply without delay.
LEADER OF CHOR. Ask of the Captain. See, he comes this way.

Enter CAPTAIN *from dug-out.*

CAPTAIN. Immaculate stranger, hail ! What lucky chance
Has brought you to this dirty bit of France ?

STAFF OFFICER. Not chance. A conscientious Brigadier
Has sent me hither.

CAPTAIN. And what seek you here ?

STAFF OFFICER. I seek your Colonel.

CAPTAIN. He is up the line.

'Tis said the foe will soon explode a mine,
And we must be prepared should he attack.

STAFF OFFICER. I think I will await him coming back.

CAPTAIN. Then chance to me at least has been most kind ;
Come, let me lead you where a drink you'll find.

(They enter dug-out and are seen relieving their thirst.)

CHORUS. Beyond the distant mountains,
Where skirted men abide
And in an uncouth language
Their skirted children chide ;
Beyond the land of sunshine,
Where never skies are blue,
There lives a silent people
Who know a thing or two.

All is not gold that glitters,
And "sirops" are rather sad ;
All is not Bass that's "bitters,"
And Gallic beer is bad ;
But out of the misty regions
Where loom the mountains tall
There comes the drink of princes—
Whisky, the Queen of all.

STAFF OFFICER. This is my seventh drink, and yet, alas !
The Colonel comes not.

CAPTAIN. Fill another glass.

STAFF OFFICER. I will. (*He does.*) The bottle's finished, I'm
afraid.

CAPTAIN. It does not matter. I drink lemonade.

LEADER OF CHOR. A doom descends upon this house, I fear ;
That was the only bottle left us here !

Enter HERALD.

HERALD. The Colonel comes. Let no ill-omened word
Escape the barrier of your teeth. I've heard
Men say his temper's in an awful state ;
Therefore beware lest some untoward fate
Befall you ; and—I do not think I'll wait.

Enter COLONEL.

(*He sees empty whisky-bottle, looks at Staff
Officer, and—*)

[*Remainder of fragment is expurgated.*]

FRAGMENT FROM THE " MODERN ILIAD "

BY THE OFFICIAL BARD

A.D. 2001. EDITION WITH NOTES AND COMMENTARIES

AND when at last, after long years of war,
The barbarous host was broken and began
To turn despairing eyes towards the East,
And there beheld, breaking above their homes,
The flaming terror of avenging Dawn,
The Leader of the British, ere he hurled
His armies in pursuit, upon the plain
Of shattered Flanders held a great review,
And all the earth was dark with moving men.
And first there passed, with solemn steps and slow
The legions of the Staff, immaculate,
Yet with the strained and mazèd look of those
Who dream at midnight of unnumbered files.¹
And in their wake ten thousand learnèd clerks
Brandishing secret orders fraught with doom.

¹ " An '*unnumbered file*'—the bugbear alike of the staff officer and the platoon commander."—*Piffle*.

About them messengers innumerable
And printers thronged and signallers who know
The lairs of buried cables and their pals¹
Who play upon the strings invisible
That span the world. Behind them mystic men
Who serve the sacred pigeons,² and in rear,
While frantic sergeant-majors called the Gods
To witness what a "falling out" was there,
The venerable sages who compose
The section Meteorological
Marched and with quavering voices counted time.
Next came the Engineers, the Railway-men,
Huge Foresters and Quarry Companies,
And bargemen dreamy-eyed yet skilled to hurl
Incredible invective at their foes,
And Searchlight Sections and wild Alchemists,
Who dabble smiling in the fumes of Hell.
And when they passed, after a little space,
The earth grew black and trembled at the tread
Of countless regiments of labour-men,
Garnered from all the corners of the Earth,
From Fiji and the Indies of the West,
From Santal and the Provinces of Ind,
From Burmah and from Southern Africa,

¹ Alternative reading, "the poles which."—*Pfunk*.

² For the first use of this bird as a messenger see account of the "Flood,"
cp. "getting the bird."—*Prof. Muddle*.

And motley slant-eyed men from far Cathay,
 And with them marched the older of the sons
 Of Her who is a mother to them all.
 Next came the Healers, doctors, nurses, cooks,
 The Sanitary Sections, Waacs,¹ and Wrens,²
 And chariot drivers of the Crimson Cross,
 And in the rear there pranced with horrible cries,
 Wielding strange weapons destined for their friends
 Yet in the last resort a doom for foes—
 The Mobile Dental Units. Many more
 There were that followed, numerous as the sands
 Of peopled Blackpool on Bank Holiday.
 Not all the paper of Northcliffean Mills³
 Would be sufficient for the tale of them.
 Nor even were the fighting men⁴ forgotten,
 Horse, foot, artillery, and at their head
 Young bloods, who often in the House had heard
 Ancestral voices prophesying peace.

¹ " 'W.A.A.C.'—stands for 'We are all cousins.' Probably because relationship was the only ground for permission to visit these 'Amazons.'"—*Bunkum*.

² "Various uses have been assigned to these birds, which are known to have been in some way connected with the Navy. For another instance of this connection between birds and the Navy, see note on 'pigeons.'"—*Muddle*.

³ "The origin of this expression is obscure. The dictator to whom it refers was expressly stated in the Assembly to have had no connections with any newspapers. Cp. 'Mills of God.'"—*Pfunk*.

⁴ "This was probably the last occasion on which *men* were used for fighting purposes."—*Pfunk*.

And last of all, the great Leviathans,¹
Both male and female, and their progeny
The monstrous parents of a monstrous brood,
Crawled slowly two by two while overhead
Aerial navies ploughed the vast inane.
So passed the splendid pageant, and from far
A mighty multitude of captives watched
And didn't like the look of things a bit.

¹ "Often called 'Tanks,' the name given to these barbarous monsters by their indignant inventor on being told by the Inventions Board that his idea would not hold water."—*Piffle*.

JEANETTE

BY PRIVATE WORDSWORTH

SWEET child ! when I behold thy face
Refulgent in this murky place,
And head bedecked with rustic fillet,
I cannot curse my doubtful billet.
For Providence at G.H.Q.
Hath evidently heard of you
And from the Quartermaster's Store
Hath issued Qualities galore—
An innocence that never fears
To stretch a hand for souvenirs,
And maiden-coyness making thee
Too shy to give them back to me,
A mien that every doubt dispels,
A total disregard for smells,
A shrewd dislike for Sergeant Higgs,
A partiality for pigs,
And many pretty courtesies
And household virtues such as these
Combine my simple heart to please.

The unexpired portion of
My rations thou didst once remove ;
Yet shall I blame thee, or condemn
Thy deed before the A.P.M. ?
Ah ! No. My child, how couldst thou guess
The nature of that lurid mess
Or tell what dangers lurk within
The compass of that mystic tin ?
Nay, rather let me think thy mind
So gentle, generous, and kind,
Perceiving that the A.S.C.
Were shamefully neglecting me,
By way of protest sought to ban
A meat unworthy of the man.
And therefore in that fond belief
Jeanette, I cannot call thee thief
Though thou didst pinch my bully beef.

Thou scarcely seem'st of mortal birth,
Yet dost thou not disdain the earth
Which lingers on thy nose and cheeks
And of thy homely nature speaks.
Ah ! happy could I be to sit
A while with thee and do my bit
About the snug paternal midden
(While others to the line are bidden).

But such things may not be, my child;
The sergeant's tongue is rude and wild
And I must put my helmet on
And to the battlefield begone.
But ere I go—the gentle maid
Hath called her friends from field and glade
And all at once the little dears
Together mingle mad with cheers.
And ah ! my eyes are filled with . . . tears.

MINNIE

BY PRIVATE ROBERT BURNS

IN wee bit housie Minnie lives
Not half a mile awa',
And yet I daurna cross the glaur
That lies atween us twa.

Ah ! gin I could but smoor her wrath
There's nought I wad na gie,
Fu' mony a time because of her
I've sworn I'm like to dee.

Her ears are daf to a' ma aiths,
Her head is unco high ;
I canna' eat, I canna' sleep,
Sae fu' o' care am I.

Her voice is in the westlin' winds,
And gin she passes by
Wi' hope and fear I wait for her,
Yet maun I stand abeigh.

MINNIE

But noo wi' lichtsome heart I go
Frae morn till even fa',
For Minnie is a Mortar an'
Last night she gaed awa'.

SERGEANT SWINBURNE GETS SHELL SHOCK

IN the silvery light of the Gotha-bewildering Goddess,
'Midst a murmur of mule-driven waggons that move in the mud,
With a wail of a woman who weeps for an ill-fitting bodice
It hurtles through Heaven and drops by my dug-out—a dud !
But further and faster than fuse flieth fear and more blinding
than blood.

Untouched—all the terrors of Tartarus gather about me,
And grin as they sit on my shoulders and whisper “ napoo,”
With horror-struck eyes on the ground as they follow and flout
me

I know I am wading through oceans and oceans of stew
Till I stagger and stumble at length to my billet and find its
the Zoo !

I sink in the straw with a sigh—though it's sombre and smelly,
An elephant asks for my pay book with pushing aplomb,
An old hippopotamus gloomily sounds the reveille,
At breakfast a porcupine cheerily proffers a bomb,
And I find I am detailed for digging fatigue in the swamps of
the Somme.

My leave is allotted at last ! Yet I know I'll be late for
The train which will certainly stop when it reaches a hill,
And ever and ever there beats on my brain as I wait for
The Adjutant signing my pass with a post-office quill,
The thunder of ten Sergeant-Majors defaming defaulters at drill !

But slowly the dawn breaks above me in crimson and argent
And all the small beasts of the waking world hover and hum,
I hear at my elbow the voice of the Orderly Sergeant
Proclaiming the moment to issue the ration of rum
And I stoop and I gaze at the jar lying void at my feet, and
am dumb !

RANK AND FILE, OR REVOLUTION À LA MODE

BY PRIVATE W. S. GILBERT

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MADAME CLICQUOT	. . .	<i>A Widow.</i>
HER THREE DAUGHTERS.		
COLONEL SMITH	. . .	<i>Commanding 1st Blankshires.</i>
CAPTAIN BROWN AND CAPTAIN JONES		<i>Of 1st Blankshires.</i>
CORPORAL DUKE OF MANDALAY	.	<i>Mess Cook.</i>
PRIVATE SIR HENRY VEREY-SMART	.	<i>Mess Waiter.</i>
PRIVATE LORD TOORAL OF LOO	}	<i>Orderlies.</i>
PRIVATE BOOKER, D.D.		

SCENE I. *Officers' Mess in Rest Billets.*

Chorus (Officers at dinner).

We're highly respectable heroes, let us dance and let us sing,
With a hey for Divisional Reserve,
In a manner that is suitable to soldiers of the King,
With a hey for Divisional Reserve.
We've hung our armour up the while no foeman can attack us,
For those who follow Mars may spend their holidays with Bacchus.
Sir Francis Lloyd is far away and Clynes he cannot track us,
With a hey for Divisional Reserve,
Fal la la.

Song.

COLONEL. What wonderful changes the War has wrought !

Who'd ever have thought,

ALL. Who'd ever have thought,

COLONEL. That we should be sipping our glass of port

As officers bold and free,

With the owner of last year's Derby winner

To serve us at dinner,

ALL. To serve us at dinner,

COLONEL. A partner in Coutts to clean our boots,

And a Duke to boil us our tea,

ALL. our tea,

COLONEL. And a Duke to boil us our tea.

COLONEL. Yes, yes. Our responsibilities are great. Are we not officers in the Smartest Regiment in France ?

ALL. We are.

COLONEL. And shall we by even so much as a hair's breadth deviate from the paths of duty and tradition ?

ALL. Never !

COLONEL. That's right. Have you all duly overdrawn at Cox's to an extent worthy of the Regiment's reputation ?

ALL. We have.

COLONEL. Have you all contracted alliances with amiable but otherwise undistinguished ladies of the stage ?

ALL. We have.

COLONEL. My boys, I am proud of you. But hush, here come the ladies.

CAPT. BROWN. A mild flirtation, Colonel?

COLONEL. A little gallantry is quite in order,

It is our duty.

ALL. It is our duty.

Enter MADAME CLICQUOT and DAUGHTERS.

Recitation.

COLONEL. Madame, we greet you. Welcome to our table.

MADAME. Monsieur le Colonel est trop aimable.

CAPT. JONES. Pray, ladies, join us in a stately dance.

LADIES. Messieurs les officiers, you honour France.

COLONEL. Tell Corporal the Duke of Mandalay

To send the orderlies to clear away.

Exit CAPTAIN BROWN.

Returns with SMART, LORD TOORAL, and BOOKER.

Trio: SMART, TOORAL, and BOOKER.

It's now a weary while

Since we left our social strata

To join the rank and file

As orderlies and waiter.

It really isn't fun,

But we've got this consolation

Of Duty nobly done

And our country's commendation.

*(They clear away—exchanging winks with ladies
behind backs of officers.)*

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Pavane : LADIES and OFFICERS.

OFFICERS. Let us tread a stately measure
At these noble ladies' side.

LADIES. Make the most of fleeting leisure
In a manner dignified.

OFFICERS. Fervidly we praise your beauty,

LADIES. That is very nice of you ;

OFFICERS. For it clearly is our duty,

LADIES. And it clearly is our due.

MME C. And now, Messieurs les officiers—we bid you good
night.

COL. & OFFICERS. Good night all.

*(They bow and retire out of opposite doors,
turning out lights.
Short interval.)*

Enter DAUGHTERS at one door and ORDERLIES at the other.

Sextette.

Hush, hush, hark !
While the household lies asleep,
Hither silently we creep.
Stolen pleasures taste the sweetest,
Stolen moments pass the fleetest,
Cupid's blind and loves the dark,
Hush, hush, hark !

(They dance.)

Enter MADAME CLICQUOT, turning on lights.

MADAME. Now what is this, now what is this? Whatever does it mean?

Explain at once the reason for this most disgraceful scene.

TOORAL. We're only young aristocrats, but oh! our hearts are true,

And in our veins the blood runs warm; although that blood is blue.

MADAME. Ah! so you've dared with words of love my daughters to address,

Two orderlies—oh! villains—and a waiter in the mess!

TOORAL. 'Tis true we've but our learning, cash, and pedigree to offer,

But love is bold, and love is rare, and so our love we proffer.

MADAME. Ah! no, this cannot be. At rank a Clicquot well may smile,

But never can a Clicquot go and wed the rank and file.

Enter CORPORAL DUKE OF MANDALAY.

DUKE. Ah! Madame, hear me ere you send them away.

MADAME (*aside*) He is very beautiful.

DUKE. For seven long and weary days I have suffered my love in silence.

MADAME. (*aside*) Be still, thou flutterer!

DUKE. But now I must speak. Madame, I love you, I worship you, I adore you. It is true I'm but a Corporal,

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and have nothing but six family seats and a house in Berkeley Square to offer you, but my devotion is such that I dare to ask you to marry me.

MADAME. Alas! It cannot be. I am la Veuve Clicquot. You are a Corporal. We must not see each other again. But I shall never love anyone else.

DUKE Nor I.

Duet.

MADAME. I'll live an ancient relic at
My home devoting delicate
Attentions to a smelly cat
Beside the parlour fire,
Or take a room at Claridge's
And watch the passing carriages
And scan the list of marriages
With ill-concealèd ire.

DUKE. I'll live an ancient mystery
With gouty feet and blistery,
Recalling ancient history
With cronies at the club,
And hoarier and hoarier
I'll grow—*sic transit gloria*—
And wander round Victoria
Or ponder in a pub.

MADAME. I'll turn to local charity
And emphasize disparity
With never-failing clarity
By visiting the poor.

DUKE. And when the bags I've dwelt in—hem!—
No longer need a belt in 'em
I'll have to go to Cheltenham
And take the beastly cure.

MADAME. And so I'll live forlorn—fully
Determined to look scornfully
On all the world, but mournfully
Bemoan my single state.

DUKE. And long ere in the tomb I lie
The Athenæum gloomily
Shall listen to me rheumily
Discoursing of my fate.

Enter BOLSHEVIST. Recit.

Now you have reached the climax of the scene,
Behold in me the God from the machine.

Song.

I'm a Bolshevist bold and free
And I worship Democracy,
Since all men are equal—a natural sequel—
I'm now at the top of the tree.
Through perilous seas and drear
The vessel of state I steer ;

50 RANK AND FILE, OR REVOLUTION À LA MODE

For I simply don't heed them, but call upon Freedom
And rule by the sanction of fear.
I trust that I make myself clear ?

ALL. Oh ! yes, you're remarkably clear.

BOLSHEVIST. Then banish all sorrow and care !
Away with content and restraint !
If you're tired of things as they are,
Just try making things as they ain't.

ALL. Then banish, etc.

BOLSHEVIST. Though political troubles are hot
They never disturb me a jot,
With language discursive and methods inversive
I easily settle the lot.
The problem of distant Ukraine
Will never perplex us again.
I simply attack it by means democratic
And blow them all up with methaine.
I trust that I make myself plain ?

ALL. Oh ! yes, you're remarkably plain.

CHORUS. Then banish, etc.

BOLSHEVIST. Now—what are your troubles, brothers,
That I may solve them for you ?

DUKE. We love these ladies, but may not marry them
Because we are not officers.

BOLSHEVIST. Then why not revolt ?

DUKE. But I've got a pedigree that dates back to the flood.

BOLSHEVIST. All men are equal. The accidents of birth should
be no bar to advancement in the state. Revolt !

DUKE. There's something in that.

PTE. SIR HENRY VEREY-SMART. But I'm a millionaire.

BOLSHEVIST. One man is as good as another. The accident of
wealth should be no handicap to the legitimate
expansion of talent. Revolt !

SIR HENRY. Very true.

PTE. BOOKER, But I'm a doctor of divinity in ten Universities.

D.D.

BOLSHEVIST. Every man has his rights. The accident of brains
should not deny you the opportunity of claiming
them. Revolt !

PTE. BOOKER, I agree.

D.D.

DUKE. We'll banish all sorrow and care,

TOORAL. Away with content and restraint.

SMART. We're tired of things as they are,

BOOKER. So we'll try making things as they ain't.

*(They seize Sam Browne belts of officers hanging
up on wall, and put them on.)*

Enter COLONEL and OFFICERS.

COLONEL. Now what is this, now what is this? Whatever can it mean?

Explain at once the reason for this most disgraceful scene!

DUKE. We've made a revolution, Colonel, while you've been away,

And we are now your officers. You're privates from to-day.

COLONEL. Good gracious me! Well, fortune ever was a fickle jade.

There's nothing left for us to do but notify Brigade.

Exit OFFICERS.

Finale.

The deed is done, and every one
Can marry one another.

For bold Sir Henry Verey-Smart can claim the lady of his heart,
And Mandalay the mother.

The deed is done. A brighter sun
Shall dawn on happier days.

The doctor of divinity can marry his affinity,
And Tooral wed Thérèse.

OTHER POEMS

CHLOE

THE AWFUL EFFECT OF FOUR YEARS' ACTIVE SERVICE ON A POET

ACCEPT this indent—Sweet—from me—
That all the blessings thou hast earned
The Gods may give ; (addressed to thee,
Repeated unto all concerned).

Soft as the violet new-unfurled,
Thine eyes with gentle kindness speak,
And all the roses of the world
Report for duty on thy cheek.

At eventime, when lights are low,
I dream I press, with lips that burn,
A thousand kisses on thy brow
(For information, and return).

And in the morning ere I rise
The Image of my Best Beloved
That floats before my waking eyes
Is duly noted and approved.

.
These lines which tell in accents true
The hopes that warm, the fears that freeze,
My love-lorn heart, are passed to you
For necessary action, please.

ODE TO SPRING

BY A CONSCRIPTED POET

O Goddess ! ever young and ever fair,
Who from long slumber wakest at the note
Of lark and linnet and the trumpet call
Of hyacinths, when I behold thine hair
Crownèd with flowers, and thy gleaming throat
White as the blooms of cherry-trees that fall

To make a path for thee
Whereon thy faery feet scarce leave a track,
When everywhere thy festival I see—
I know it is the moment to attack !

And that secluded vale, the haunt of bees,
Which nestles—bright with beaded gossamer—
Deep-hidden 'neath the shadow of the hill
And girt about with dark and aged trees
Whose leaves the boisterous zephyrs seldom stir,—
That little dell, so quiet and so still

Whereon thou lovest to lie

Unwatched by any save the patient cows
Who stand and gaze into eternity—
What cover for a battery of “hows.”!

And when upon some lofty summit, deep
In fragrant clover I recline at ease
And gaze across the distant valleys, dark
With foliage and the shades of even, and steep
My weary senses in the gentle breeze
All odorous of thee, while the gay lark.

Singing of life and hope,
Hangs in the dome of heaven—what thoughts inspire
My fond and frenzied soul, O Spring?—“This slope
Is convex and affords no field of fire!”

ODE TO SIMPLICITY

BY A RATIONED POET

THE rich let crowded Thames entice,
Expensive cots let others share,
And bungalows—me shall suffice
A house in Berkeley Square.

Let those whom fond ambitions haunt
And emulation—if they please—
Before admiring noses vaunt
The smell of Cheddar cheese.

The rabbit let them proudly munch,
Exotic butter show with glee,
While legs of mutton grace their lunch
And damson jam their tea.

My table nothing strange or rare
Shall load, the uninvited guest
Partaking of my simple fare
Shall leave me unimpressed.

ODE TO SIMPLICITY

I'll not attempt the gander rich
With apple sauce—for I can buy
In any shop the pâté which
His liver shall supply.

Me bearded oysters shall content
And caviare and woodcock plain
And grouse, by my dear brother sent,
Washed down by dry champagne.

A LULLABY

BY A POET ON SENTRY DUTY

OH ! little dud, sing lullaby !
With what fond care oppressed
I keep my vigil at thy side,
Lest aught disturb thy rest,
While on thy face from time to time
I turn an anxious eye !
Oh ! little dud, sing lullaby,
Sing lulla-lullaby !

So still thou sleepest, little dud,
Throughout the breathless night,
Almost I feel that thou art dead,
But when I think how light
A touch would wake thee into life,
Most earnestly I cry,
Oh ! little dud, sing lullaby,
Sing lulla-lullaby !

Then slumber on ! The world is rude.
In slumber dost thou keep

A LULLABY

Thine innocence, sweet dud ! But, oh !
How thin a veil is sleep !
Within thy form, so round and smooth,
What lurking passions lie !—
Oh ! little dud, sing lullaby,
Sing lulla-lullaby !

IN LACRIMAS

BY A GASED POET

“ WHY dost thou stand and weep, pale youth,
Beside the Menin Gate,
The afternoon parade is done
And there's no evening hate ?

“ Is it that thou dost contemplate
Youth's doleful destiny,
Or that some nearer grief hath touched
The fountains of thine eye ? ”

“ I met a military man,
As in the dusk I stood,
Three stripes upon his arm he bore,
His mien was wild and rude.

“ He pinned me with a steely glance
As sternly he began,
‘ From 6 p.m. to 7 a.m.
You'll be on guard, young man.’

- “ He passed, and while I stood transfixed,
As by a magic spell,
Soft sighing through the stilly air
There came the soundless shell.
- “ There came the soundless shell and spread
About my lonely feet,
A soothing perfume as of pears,
And languorously sweet.
- “ It breathed of homely orchards—warm
Beneath the Sussex sun—
It filled the air—and I forgot
To put my goggles on.
- “ And that is why I stand and weep,
Beside the Menin Gate,
Though afternoon parade is done
And there's no evening hate.”

STINKING FARM

BY A PICARDY POET OF THE FUTURE

“Many of the names now given to places in the battle-area will survive the war.”—Daily Paper.

This may be rather embarrassing for the Picardy Poet of the future.

THE leafy glades of “Maida Vale”
Are bright with bursting may,
And daffodils and violets pale
Bedew “The Milky Way”;
There’s perfect peace in “Regent Street,”
In “Holborn” rural charm,
But nowhere smells the Spring so sweet
As down by “Stinking Farm.”

And as I rode through “Dead Cow Lane,”
Beneath the dungeon keep
Of “Wobbly House” that tops the plain,
I saw a maiden peep;
Her glance was like the dappled doe’s;
She blushed with shy alarm,
As pink as any Rambler-rose
That climbs at “Stinking Farm.”

STINKING FARM

O maiden, if it be my fate
To win so great a boon,
At " Hell-fire Corner " I will wait
Beneath the silver moon ;
I'll swear no maid but thee I know
As softly arm-in-arm
Along the " Blarney Road " we go
That leads to " Stinking Farm."

And we will wander, O my Queen,
By many a mossy nook,
Where limpid waters flow between
The banks of " Beery Brook " ;
In " Purgatory " we will roam
Where blow the breezes warm,
If thou wilt come and make thy home,
O sweet, at " Stinking Farm."

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF BINGO, OUR TRENCH DOG

BY THE TRENCH BARD

WEEP, weep, ye dwellers in the delvèd earth,
Ah, weep, ye watchers by the dismal shore
Of No Man's Land, for Bingo is no more ;
He is no more, and well ye knew his worth,
For whom on bully-beefless days were kept
Rare bones by each according to his means,
And, while the Quartermaster-Sergeant slept,
The elusive pork was rescued from the beans.
He is no more, and, impudently brave,
The loathly rats sit grinning on his grave.

Him mourn the grimy cooks and bombers ten,
The sentinels in lonely posts forlorn,
The fierce patrols with hands and tunics torn,
The furtive band of sanitary men.
The murmuring sound of grief along the length
Of traversed trench the startled Hun could hear ;
The Captain, as he struck him off the strength,
Let fall a sad and solitary tear ;

'Tis even said a batman passing by
Had seen the Sergeant-Major wipe his eye.

The fearful fervour of the feline chase
He never knew, poor dog, he never knew ;
Content with optimistic zeal to woo
Reluctant rodents in this murky place,
He never played with children on clean grass,
Nor dozed at ease beside the glowing embers,
Nor watched with hopeful eye the tea-cakes pass,
Nor smelt the heather-smell of Scotch Septembers,
For he was born amid a world at war
Although unrecking what we struggled for

Yet who shall say that Bingo was unblest
Though all his Sprattless life was passed beneath
The roar of mortars and the whistling breath
Of grim, nocturnal heavies going west ?
Unmoved he heard the evening hymn of hate,
Unmoved would gaze into his master's eyes.
For all the sorrows men for men create
In search of happiness wise dogs despise,
Finding ecstatic joy in every rag
And every smile of friendship worth a wag.

MUD

WE vowed our hearts to France—oh ! loathly Mud—
When first we donned our armour for the fray—
But not—oh ! not our legs ! Hero and dud
Thou dost engulf alike in common clay !
Where is the pomp and circumstance of war,
The glamour of the men who fought at Crecy ?
Were ever noble warriors before
Doomed to appear so miserably messy ?

To fade into a shell hole in the night
Is not my own idea of war at all !
Abominable Mud ! If I've to fight
At least then let me like a soldier fall !
Didst thou embrace the equine tank at Troy ?
Or clog the heavies of the heroic Greeks ?
Or daub our cavaliers at Fontenoy ?
Or stain the radiance of Napolcon's brecks ?

And if at Camelot upon parade
Thou hadst sucked up the legs of Launcelot

Or splashed the nose of pure Sir Galahad,
Would Arthur of the blameless tongue have not
Ventured a little oath at last ? And would
Stout Cortez, had he gazed upon his men
Sprouting like mushrooms in the mud, have stood
SILENT upon a peak in Darien ?

THE SACRED DOCUMENTS

MAJOR Augustus Edward Grace
Was D.A.A.G. Corps,
And kept the Sacred Documents
In pigeon-holes galore,
And knew that on his shoulders lay
The burden of the war.

No officer on all the Staff
Was diligent as he ;
'Twas but a little fault he had
That caused the tragedy.
A trifle absent-minded Grace
Was sometimes apt to be.

One morning—I remember well,
The day was wild and wet—
(The horror of that dreadful time !
It makes me tremble yet)—
With “ A oblique stroke four five two ”
Grace lit his cigarette !

THE SACRED DOCUMENTS

That evening from the Army came
A note for Major Grace ;
“ Ref. A oblique stroke four five two,
Line three, delete ‘ his face.’ ”
But “ A oblique stroke four five two ”
Had vanished into space !

We sought the Sacred Document
Through half a hundred files,
At first with natural confidence
And deprecating smiles,
Like cats that for the first time tread
The dim nocturnal tiles.

But when we sought, and sought in vain,
Slowly a nameless dread
Began to seize us, and the hairs
Stood up upon each head
As in each other's startled eyes
The dreadful thought we read.

The Sacred Document was lost !
We heard the furies mock,
The D.A.A. and Q.M.G.
In secret sold his stock.
And when the Corps Commander knew
He fainted with the shock.

That night, when in our beds we lay,
We saw—as in a trance—
A Britain humbled to the dust,
A dominated France.
But ah ! for human vanity
Beneath the light of chance !

A bomb was dropped at dawn and left
The offices a wreck,
And of the Sacred Documents
Was found no single speck.
And yet—and Yet—and YET the war
Went on without a check !

JOSEPH ARTHUR BROWN

THE name of Joseph Arthur Brown
By some profound mischance
Was sent right through to G.H.Q.
As " Killed in action, France."

So when poor Joseph went to draw
His bully beef and bread,
" You're not upon the strength, my son,"
The Quartermaster said.

To Sergeant Baird then Joseph went
And told his fortune harsh,
But Sergeant Baird on Joseph glared
And pulled his great moustache.

" Have I not taught you discipline
For three long years? " said he,
" If you are down as dead, young Brown,
Why, dead you'll have to be."

In vain the journal of his town
Was bought by friends to please,
That he might see his eulogy
In local *Journal*ese ;

For to the Captain Joseph went
With teardrops in his eye,
And said, " I know I'm dead, but oh !
I am so young to die ! "

And at the Captain's feet he knelt
And clasped him by the knee.
But on his face no sign of grace
Poor Joseph Brown could see.

" Then to *John Bull* I'll write," he cried,
" Since supplication fails."
" But you are dead," the Captain said,
" And dead men tell no tales."

So reckless passion seized upon
The luckless Private Brown,
And with two blows upon the nose
He knocked the Captain down.

'Mid cries of horror and surprise
They led the lad away.
Before the Colonel grim and stern
They brought him up next day.

But when the Colonel sentenced Brown
(R.62703)
With thund'rous voice and language choice
To thirty days F.P.,

Across the trembling prisoner's face
A smile was seen to spread,
As he replied, with conscious pride,
" You can't, 'cos I am dead."

THE CALL OF THE WILD

OH ! for the wild, wild life I led
Before I settled down
To the humdrum rôle
Of a military mole
In a subterranean town !

Oft when on night patrol I go
By the lights of the Bosch beguiled,
('Tis an exercise
Which is weak but wise)
There comes the call of the Wild.

The call of the raging roaring streets,
The call of the pavements bright,
The call of the gay
Who walk by day
And the sad who walk by night.

THE CALL OF THE WILD

The call of the thrill of a Christie sale
And the fight for a bargain rare :
Of the red-letter days
When you back both ways
The horse that wins by a hair.

The call of adventures strange and grim
And of dangers bravely run
'Mid the mystical lairs
Of bulls and bears
In the depths of E.C.I.

The call of skirmishes fought in June
With the mothers of daughters fair,
Of the fatal glance
At the last big dance
And the kill in Eaton Square.

But the vision fades, and the joys of Youth
Are done, and I've settled down
To the humdrum rôle
Of a military mole
In a subterranean town.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

BY THE KAISER

WHEN King Canute sat by the sea
To stop the waves—but shirked it,
He can't have known—it seems to me—
The tide would turn at half-past three
Or else he might have worked it.

And so it was that old Canute,
His kingly honour pawning,
Allowed the waves to reach his boot
And then proclaimed in accents cute
He meant it as a warning.

But kings should fly their flag with pride,
Nor ever deign to strike it.
And if they watch the turn of tide
They'll still be on the winning side
Although they may not like it.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

So now for Socialists I yearn
Which really is a rum thing.
With democratic zeal I burn
(Until the tide again shall turn
And then I'll give them something !)

FRAGMENT

A HASTY word, a foolish jest ill-spoken,
An angry glance and all our dreams are broken,
A jealous thought—the wind that passes by
Blows them away and leaves us but—a sigh !

HAPPINESS

WHAT art thou, happiness ? A golden cup
Of drowsy hemlock or a scarlet bloom
That at a mortal's touch withereth up ?
A distant planet shining in the gloom ?

Thou art a Moloch that dost feed on flame
And human hearts. Ten thousand worship thee
And sacrifice their children in thy name,
But thou art silent as eternity.

Thou art a fountain set upon a height
Whose waters glitter in the noonday heat ;
Towards thee, parchèd thousands wildly fight
Their way—to find thy taste is bitter sweet !

Then let us laugh, since life is but a jest,
And dance—the sport of every wind that blows,
We live to please the mighty satirist.
Is death itself a joke ? Who knows—who knows ?

ODE

BEHOLD ! A solitary figure stands
Silent, upon a peak in Picardy,
Gazing across the devastated lands
And flaming farms of France. Who—who is he
Who moves not, though about him great shells moan
And shriller bullets whistle through his hair,
Making a parting where no parting was ?
Frowning and still he stands, and all alone,
No sounds of warring legions anywhere
(Save the aforesaid bullets). Barren grass
And empty miles of mud and mystery
Lie dumb beneath his gaze. But suddenly
Out of a crumphole creeps a cautious cat,
Of doubtful temper true, and far from fat.
But what cares he—ah ! what indeed cares he ?
Smiling he pats her as she ambles past.
B——ch T——s finds his paragraph at last !

ODE

WITH COMPLIMENTS TO CAPTAIN BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

IMMORTAL twain !
Castor and Pollux of our firmament !
Would I could hymn you in a worthier strain,
On whom are bent
The eyes of all the Anglo-Saxon race
In this great time of stress.
Mirrored upon whose face great happiness we guess,
Upon whose lips an Empire breathless hangs.
Who could replace you—who ?
Should fortune strike you down with fateful fangs
Hissing the loud " Napoo ! "
No ribbons mar the bashful monotone
Of your proud breasts, nor any tabs of red.
You organize no patriotic loan,
Neither control our bread.
Yet Providence—remembering family ties—
Could plan no greater hurt
Than bear you off—nor win a greater prize,
Oh, " Alf " and " Bert. "

PHILOSOPHY FOR ADVERTISERS

I

"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty," sings the poet,
"And that is all we need to know." We know it.
Keep beautiful and lovers true you'll find ;
Use Poggle's Powder and deceive mankind.

2

"How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great,"
Whom chronic lack of cash has bowed
Down from their high estate.
But let Fitzclarence bring content,
For he can ease their moan
By lending cash at five per cent.
On note of hand alone.

3

"Ever let the fancy roam ;
Pleasure never is at home."
Do not sit and mope with Alice ;
Come and see our Picture Palace.

4

Doubt not, O Man, the hand of Providence
Because thou art not able to explain
The evils of the world, nor wonder whence
We draw our sad inheritance of pain.
Consider rather how the gods provide
A natural relief for every ill ;
The nettle and the dock-leaf side by side,
The Christmas dinner and the Pinkney Pill.

5

In opposites attraction lies, 'tis said ;
Since he is dark a blonde he'll want to wed ;
Then try Nobell's Peroxide for thine hair ;
For ever will he love and thou be fair.

6

'Tis not for youthful bloods to quaff
Our " very special " port,
A brand that makes the butler laugh
And connoisseurs to snort.
But for your wealthy aunt 'twill make
A drink to suit her age ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
It for a " Hermitage."

7

Achievement's never equal to
The pleasure of pursuit ;
We long, because it's something new,
To taste exotic fruit.
A subtle joy in life and art
From mysteries we gain ;
We worship with a joyful heart
That which we can't explain.

Enough. Where ignorance is bliss
'Tis folly to be wise ;
So come and try our sausages,
Explore our rabbit-pies.

TO A SMALL BOY

BANG, bang the drum, my son, and blow
The trumpet loud and shrill,
And wave thy tiny sword, although
There's no one there to kill.

Stand up thy soldiers one by one
Along the chequered hall,
And shoot them with thy tiny gun,
And laugh to see them fall.

To thee the war is but a name,
It's horrors unrevealed ;
But father plays the self-same game,
Though in a grimmer field.

He plays at soldiers far away,
Although it's not for fun,
That in the future thou mayst play
At soldiers . . . with thy son.

“ MUFTI ”

WHEN I put on my “ civies,”
How happy I shall be
To hear no more the cannon roar,
And know that I am free !

To crease putteeless trousers,
And sport the spotless spat,
And grow long hair without a care
Beneath a bowler hat !

To wander past the Horse Guards,
And smile a smile benign,
And say, “ I pay for them, and they
Are really rather fine.”

To spend tattooless evenings
Within the friendly pubs ;
To pass with hands in pockets bands
Of unsaluted subs.

And yet perhaps we'll sometimes
Remember now and then
Those other days and other ways
When we were soldiermen.

" MUFTI "

And some of us may ponder
On things we learned out there.
Our country's call still sounds for all,
If only we will hear.

We citizens who soldiered
When foes were at the gate,
If so we will, may soldier still,
And still may serve the State.

ENVOIE

How shall I say good-bye to you, wonderful, terrible days,
If I should live to live and leave 'neath an alien soil
You, my men, who taught me to walk with a smile in the ways
Of the valley of shadows, taught me to know you and love you,
 and toil
Glad in the glory of fellowship, happy in misery, strong
In the strength that laughs at its weakness, laughs at its
 sorrows and fears,
Facing the world that was not too kind with a jest and a song ?
What can the world hold afterwards worthy of laughter or tears ?

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